

URGENT ACTION

SYRIAN ACTIVIST NO LONGER AT TORTURE RISK

Young Syrian activist Hanadi Zahlout, who had been held in incommunicado detention at an unknown location after her arrest on 4 August, has now appeared before a court and is in regular contact with her family and her lawyer. She appears to be no longer at risk of torture.

Hanadi Zahlout was brought before an investigating judge at a criminal court on 4 October, following her arrest on 4 August from a café in Damascus. The day prior to her court appearance she was moved from the Political Security branch in al-Fayha, Damascus, where she had been held since her arrest, to 'Adra prison, north-east of Damascus.

Amnesty International was informed that Hanadi Zahlout is facing charges along with six other activists including Shady Abu Fakher, a film maker who disappeared in Damascus on 23 July. All seven are accused of charges related to incitement of protests, connections with other prominent activists and membership of a secret organization. A contact told Amnesty International that their lawyers applied for their release on 11 October but their request was denied by the court.

Hanadi Zahlout currently has regular access to her family and her lawyer and a contact informed Amnesty International that she was not subjected to torture during her detention. However, Amnesty International was told about one incident of ill-treatment during the transfer from court to prison on 6 October, when she was slapped by a woman believed to be a pro-regime lawyer. Her lawyers are in the process of lodging a complaint about this incident but believe that her overall safety is not endangered.

Hanadi Zahlout, born in 1982, is a women's rights activist and a member of the Local Coordination Committees (LCC) – a network of committees responsible for organizing and planning protests. For much of the time between her arrest on 4 August and the day she appeared in court, she had been held in incommunicado detention at an unknown location. This raised fears that she was at risk of torture or even that she had been subjected to enforced disappearance.

Amnesty International is concerned that she may have been detained and charged solely for peacefully exercising her rights to freedom of expression and assembly so will continue to monitor her case.

Many thanks to all who took action on behalf of Hanadi Zahlout. No further action is requested from the UA network at this time.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 258/11. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/045/2011/en>

Name: Hanadi Zahlout
Gender m/f: female

Further information on UA: 258/11 Index: MDE 24/066/2011 Issue Date: 13 October 2011

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